

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 MCT-01 HA-05 SIL-01 LAB-04 COME-00
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1838
INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
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SUBJECT: BRITAIN REPROACHES IRELAND

REF: A. BELFAST 004, B. DUBLIN 0058

1. SUMMARY: SECRETARY MASON REBUFFED PM LYNCH'S REMARKS ON NORTHERN IRELAND (REFTELS) AND REPEATED BASIC POINTS OF BRITISH POLICY, IN TERMS THAT COVER THE CONCEPT BUT NOT THE SPECIFICS OF THE COLORED PHRASE "POWER SHARING." POLITICIANS' AND NEWSPAPERS' COMMENTS FOLLOW EXPECTED LINES. END SUMMARY.

2. MASON STATEMENT: SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND ROY MASON QUICKLY, AND SEVERELY, REBUKED PM LYNCH IN A JANUARY 9 STATEMENT. HE COULD HAVE WAITED FOR QUESTION TIME IN THE COMMONS JANUARY 12. MASON SAID HE WAS "SURPRISED AND DISAPPOINTED BY THE UNHELPFUL COMMENTS" MADE BY LYNCH. A "CLEAR UNDERSTANDING" OF EACH GOVERNMENT'S POSITION HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED AT THE OCTOBER MEETING OF PRIME MINISTERS. HE LISTED THE FOLLOWING FOUR PRINCIPLES, WHICH HE SAID HAD THE SUPPORT OF THE MAJOR PARTIES IN WESTMINSTER (TEXT AS REPORTED IN THE PRESS):
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(1) "NI WILL REMAIN PART OF THE UK FOR SO LONG AS THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE THERE SO WISH".

(2) "IT IS OUR AIM TO ESTABLISH IN NI A FULLY DEVOLVED GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENT."

(3) "WE WANT TO SEE MORE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF NI BEING CONDUCTED BY LOCALLY ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES, AND THE MAIN PARTIES AT WESTMINSTER ARE AGREED THAT ANY DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM MUST BE ONE WHICH BOTH SIDES OF THE COMMUNITY CAN SUPPORT AND SUSTAIN. THE GOVERNMENT ARE NOT COMMITTED TO ANY PARTICULAR ARRANGEMENT AS THE ONLY WAY OF ACHIEVING THIS SUPPORT AND STABILITY."

(4) "I DO NOT THINK ANYONE IN NI HAS ANY DOUBT ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO THE PROVINCE. I DO NOT NEED TO REPEAT THE LIST OF IMPORTANT MEASURES WHICH I HAVE INTRODUCED OVER THE PAST YEAR WITH THE SOLE AIM OF IMPROVING THE ECONOMIC AND INDUSTRIAL POSITION WITHIN NI.... THERE IS NO QUESTION OF ECONOMIC WITHDRAWAL, NOR ANY RISK THAT THE LEVEL OF TROOPS IN NI IN SUPPORT OF THE RUC (POLICE) IN THEIR FIGHT AGAINST CRIME BE ALTERED IN ANY ARBITRARY FASHION (ALTHOUGH TROOP LEVELS CAN BE LOWERED OR RAISED AS NEEDED)..... IN THE TASK OF SEEKING OUT TERRORISTS AND BRINGING THEM BEFORE THE COURTS, THE RUC -- AND LET US NOT FORGET THE GARDAI -- NEED ALL THE SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT WHICH CAN BE OFFERED. TALK OF AMNESTY FOR THOSE CONVICTED ON CAREFULLY GATHERED EVIDENCE PRESENTED BEFORE THE COURTS CAN DO NOTHING BUT GIVE SUCCOUR TO LAW BREAKERS."

3. POLITICAL AND PRESS COMMENT: OFFICIAL UNIONIST LEADER HARRY WEST WAS NOT MOLLIFIED BY THE STATEMENT AND SAID HE WAS STILL WAITING FOR MASON TO REPUDIATE LYNCH ON POWER SHARING. DUP
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LEADER REV. IAN PAISLEY WELCOMED WEST'S "STRONG ATTITUDE" BUT IN EFFECT RULED OUT DUP REPRESENTATION SHOULD TALKS ON DEVOLUTION BE RESUMED. AND HE HINTED AT VIOLENCE IF NECESSARY TO PROTECT "ULSTER'S PROTESTANT HERITAGE" -- A THREAT ECHOED BY THE LOYALIST PARAMILITARY ULSTER DEFENSE ASSOCIATION. SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY LEADERS ARE RESTRAINED. THEY CRITICIZED WHAT THEY SEE AS LOYALIST OVERREACTION, BUT GERRY FITT SHOWED SOME DISCOMFORT AT LYNCH'S REMARKS ON AMNESTY.

4. THE PROTESTANT AND CATHOLIC-ORIENTED DAILIES EDITORIALIZED AS COULD BE EXPECTED. THE GENERALLY MODERATE "TELEGRAPH" SAID THAT LYNCH'S TALK OF UNIFICATION EVEN IN TERMS OF "AN ASPIRATION RATHER THAN A PRIORITY ONLY HELPS TO STIR EMOTIONS NEEDLESSLY. IF HE DOES NOT INTEND TO DO ANYTHING CONCRETE ABOUT IT -- AND HE ADMITTED THAT A LOT OF WORK WOULD BE NEEDED TO PREPARE THE GROUND -- HE SHOULD EITHER WITHDRAW IT OR LET IT LIE LIKE THE SLEEPING DOG IT IS." AND ON AMNESTY, "BY ANY INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS, MR. LYNCH HAS INTERVENED UNNECESSARILY AND RECKLESSLY IN DELICATE MATTERS."

5. COMMENT: WE NOTE THAT IN HIS THIRD POLICY PRINCIPLE MASON DID NOT USE THE PHRASE "POWER SHARING." IT HAS BECOME A CODE

WORD WHICH THE LOYALISTS AUTOMATICALLY REJECT. MASON MAINTAINS THE PRINCIPLE THAT BOTH SIDES MUST BE ABLE TO "SUPPORT AND SUSTAIN" WHATEVER DEVELOPS POLITICALLY, BUT IN HIS CONCEPTION A SPECIFIC FORM OF POWER SHARING DOES NOT HAVE TO BE INCLUDED. WORDS OF THIS TYPE MAY NOT BE CATEGORICAL ENOUGH TO BRING THE OFFICIAL UNIONISTS AND PAISLEY (ACTING AS "WATCHDOG") BACK TO TALK ABOUT AN INTERIM DEVOLUTION OF AUTHORITY.

6. THE PRINCIPLES THEMSELVES DO NOT RESPOND TO LYNCH'S SUBSTANTIVE POINTS BUT ARE PHRASED NEUTRALLY. ON THE AMNESTY POINT, MASON CLEARLY IDENTIFIED TERRORISTS WITH CRIME AND HINTED BROADLY THAT IT WAS IN BOTH COUNTRIES INTERESTS TO MAINTAIN A TOUGH ATTITUDE.

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